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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE

INTRODUCTION

1. Isaiah & Personality
2. The Genetic Approach
3. Isaiah: At First an Historic Figure
4. Isaiah and His Age

THE POLITICAL AND MORAL LEADERSHIP OF ISAIAH

BIBLIOGRAPHY

CHAPTER I THE EVOLUTION OF ISRAELITE TRIBE ORGANIZATION

1. The Membership of the Early Family
 2. The Established "Paternal" House" (Patriarchy)
 3. The Disfranchisement of the Slave
 4. The Development of the Hebrew Nation
 5. The Emergence of Justice
 6. The Prosecution of War
 7. United Plan Action
 8. The Conception of Blood Relationship Evolutionary
- BIBLIOGRAPHY

CHAPTER II AN ISRAELI RELIGION AS A PART OF THE HEBREW CULTURE

1. Influence of Traditional Religion
 2. The Characteristic of Ancient Religion
 3. The Development of the Hebrew Religion
 4. The Development of the Hebrew Religion
 5. The Development of the Hebrew Religion
 6. The Development of the Hebrew Religion
 7. The Development of the Hebrew Religion
 8. The Development of the Hebrew Religion
- BIBLIOGRAPHY

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CHAPTER III THE POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT OF ISAIAH

1. Introduction
2. Pre-Israelite History
3. History Contemporary with Isaiah
4. The Neo-Babylonian War
5. a. Warning from Isaiah
5. b. The Prophecies of Isaiah
6. The Sign of Immanuel
6. Isaiah's Conception of Ideal Political Development
7. An Interpretation
7. a. Isaiah's Image and Style
7. b. The Significance of Isaiah's Prophecy

THESIS

Submitted in the Department of
Old Testament Literature in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirement for
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Pacific School of Religion

THE POLITICAL AND MORAL IMPLICATIONS OF ISRAEL



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE-----	P. 4
INTRODUCTION-----	5
1. Isaiah: A Personality-----	5
2. The Genetic Approach -----	5
3. Isaiah: At First an Hebraic Figure-----	7
4. Isaiah and His Time -----	7
5. Isaiah and Contemporary Prophets-----	8
BIBLIOGRAPHY-----	10
CHAPTER i THE EVOLUTION OF HEBRAIC TRIBAL ORGANIZATION-----	11
1. The Membership of the Early Family-----	11
2. The Established "Fathers' House" (beth Ab)-----	11
3. The Chieftain of the Clan-----	12
4. The Development of the Hebrew Nation-----	13
5. The Execution of Justice-----	13
6. The Prosecution of War-----	14
7. Unified Clan Action-----	15
8. The Conception of Blood Relationship Evolutionary-----	15
BIBLIOGRAPHY-----	17
CHAPTER ii ANCIENT RELIGION AS A PART OF THE SOCIAL ORDER-----	18
1. Influence of Traditional Religion-----	18
2. The Characteristics of Ancient Religion-----	18
3. The Importance of Ritual and Traditional Usage-----	19
4. The Function of Ancient Religion-----	19
5. Semitic Religious Development Retarded-----	20
6. The Advent of "Particularism"-----	21
7. The Conception of Divine Authority Introduced-----	21
8. The Conception of the One True God-----	22
BIBLIOGRAPHY-----	24
CHAPTER iii THE POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT OF ISAIAH-----	25
1. Introduction-----	25
2. Pre-Isaianic History-----	25
3. History Contemporary with Isaiah-----	27
4. The Syro-Ephraimitish War-----	28
5. a. Warning from Isaiah-----	28
b. The Fearlessness of Isaiah-----	30
5. The Sign of Immanuel-----	31
6. Isaiah's Conception of Ideal Political Government-----	32
7. An Interim-----	35
a. Israel, Judah, and Syria-----	35
b. Fall of Samaria in 722-----	35
8. Isaiah's Attitude Toward "Inviolability" of Temple-----	36
9. The Ascension of Hezekiah to the Judean Kingship-----	37
10. Sennacherib's Invasion-----	38
a. Introduction-----	38
b. Isaiah Again Condemns Political Alliance-----	39
c. Isaiah Offers Hope-----	40

TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

11.	Sennacherib and Jerusalem, 701 B.C.-----	P.41
	a. Introduction-----	41
	b. Isaiah's Leadership-----	42
12.	Isaiah Confronts New Problems-----	43
	a. "Eat and drink for Tomorrow we die"-----	43
	b. Removal of Shebna-----	44
	c. Warning Concerning Political Nepotism-----	45
13.	The Arrival of Rabshakeh: His Tactics-----	46
14.	The Supreme Test of Isaiah's Political Leadership--	48
	BIBLIOGRAPHY-----	51
CHAPTER iv ISAIAH A SOCIAL LEADER-----		52
1.	Introduction-----	52
2.	"Land Grabbers" Condemned-----	53
3.	Liquor Condemned-----	53
4.	Scepticism Condemned-----	54
5.	Confusion of Moral Distinctions Condemned-----	55
6.	Shrewed Politicians Condemned-----	55
7.	Corrupt Judges Condemned-----	55
8.	Further Sympathy for Oppressed Expressed-----	56
9.	A Conception of a Regenerated Society-----	56
10.	An Indication of Incomplete Record of Prophecies---	57
11.	Summary-----	58
	BIBLIOGRAPHY-----	61
CHAPTER v CONDEMNATION OF EXTERNAL RELIGIOUS CEREMONIALS-----		62
1.	Introduction-----	62
2.	Types of Sacrifices-----	62
3.	Development of Ritual-----	63
4.	The Oblation-----	64
5.	Isaiah's Attitude Toward Sacrifice-----	64
6.	Isaiah Breaks with Ritual and Institutions-----	65
7.	Summary-----	66
	BIBLIOGRAPHY-----	69
CHAPTER vi ISAIAH'S CONCEPTION OF GOD-----		70
1.	Introduction-----	70
2.	Isaiah's Contribution-----	70
3.	The Heart of Isaiah's Message-----	71
4.	The Holiness of Jahveh-----	71
5.	"The Great Arraignment"-----	72
6.	Summary-----	73
	BIBLIOGRAPHY-----	74
CONCLUSION-----		75
BIBLIOGRAPHY-----		77-80

PREFACE

It is with deep personal feeling that this thesis is dedicated to the late Professor Willian Frederic Bade, with whom it has been my privilege to have spent some time in the Land of the Master and under whom I have had two inspiring years of study. Doctor Bade's Personality and his Appreciation of Isaiah inspired the present writer to choose the life of the Prophet as the basis for this work.

Old Testament study under Doctor Bade has contributed to the material herewith presented and much from the lecture notes has been incorporated within the body of the Thesis. Following the suggestion of Professor Bade, this work does not represent a mosaic of quotations from authorities, but rather represents an attempt on the part of the writer to digest facts from authoritative sources, subsequently recording them in his own words.

Footnotes indicate direct quotations, and the bibliography at the end of each chapter indicates the sources from which conclusions were drawn. All Biblical quotations are from the American Revised Version. One instance, namely that of the last quotation, from Valerton, presents a problem, inasmuch as the writer is at present unable to locate the source of the quotation; however, with this word of explanation, it is herewith included.

THE POLITICAL AND MORAL LEADERSHIP OF ISAIAH

INTRODUCTION

1. Isaiah: A Personality

It is the intention of the writer to attempt to present Isaiah as a "Personality of Revelation", not as a mere outstanding moral and political figure who preached reform in the eighth century B.C.

This emphasis of the Personality of Isaiah is necessary as a result of the fact that too often the recorded or "frozen" utterances of an outstanding character prevent us from appreciating the very essence of the nature of the man which was responsible for the preservation of his message. That is to say, we fail to be cognizant of the influence of "Personality" as it moved about in its environment influencing the lives of men.

2. The Genetic Approach:

It is necessary that we account for such an outstanding Personality by attempting to see how it was that Isaiah was able to transcend the physical and social limitations which beset his predecessors and contemporaries, as well as many who followed him; thus it is that environment

exerts a predominant negative or positive effect on a man.

No man can be adequately evaluated unless he be studied in the light of the institutions of his time, and this is true in the case of the prophet Isaiah, inasmuch as human society is progressive development and not static in nature. This makes for a state of flux or change in civilization, often showing a brief negative acceleration, but mainly evolutionary, being both selective and accumulative.

This recognition of the importance of environment in the situation immediately raises a two-fold question, namely, in the first place, what parts of Isaiah's message were derived from his surrounding cultures or imparted to them? And in the second place, how did these parts, combined with those of his own social inheritance, effectively produce his prophetic message? That is to say, did Isaiah get the threads of his message from without, or did he formulate something that was new and original?

Anthropology shows that cultures and ideals grow in focal points more often than it is that a thread is picked up by an individual who hasn't been properly trained for it, and is thus grafted upon his own culture. This is tantamount to saying a prime requisite for development is that it be evolutionary rather than revolutionary. Thus it is that we must study logically that which has been developed psychologically at various focal points; this leads to the fact that a cross-section of any one culture cannot give an adequate picture of the degree of progress in civilization

as a whole.

3. Isaiah: At First an Hebraic Figure

From the content of the above paragraph, it is evident that at first Isaiah could not have been considered as being a world-important reformer, but that his contributions fundamentally may be considered as having been purely localized to the advancement of the Hebrew race of the period, later filtering out into world-wide influence.

The substantiation of this statement in part embraces the theme of this Thesis, and cannot be offered here, but is to be withheld until sufficient data are brought to the attention of the reader that he may be led to arrive at the conclusion by the subject-matter herewith presented.

It is sufficient to remind the reader here that it is the man Isaiah, his Personality, that is to be discussed; this requires that we drop from our minds the "Book of Isaiah", as it is generally considered by the layman.

4. Isaiah and His Time

Isaiah lived in a trying time for Judah; its own kings were weak and the Assyrian kings were threatening at all times. It is generally recognized that the historical setting of a prophecy is of the greatest importance, and that no book of the Bible can be less interpreted apart from the history of its time than the Book of Isaiah. It is to this book that we go for the achievements of Isaiah; it is the influence of the historical setting that helps determine

the authentic work of Isaiah.

In this introduction, the historical events bearing upon Isaiah's work and teachings are limited to the following account: the later years of the eighth century B.C. were strenuous times for the Jews of Jerusalem. Israel combined with Syria to attack in 735-734; the Northern Kingdom fell before the Assyrians in 721 and in 701 the Assyrians besieged Jerusalem. Such was the political situation in which Isaiah lived at Jerusalem after having been called to the prophetic office in 740.

5. Isaiah and Contemporary Prophets

It is the burden of this thesis to show that Isaiah was a moral and political leader. Thus it is that the implication of the title can only be substantiated when one compares the teachings of Isaiah with those of his foremost contemporaries or predecessors and views him in the light of his times and environment. Occasionally, it is to be noted, Isaiah often surpassed in his capacity for moral and political leadership even those who followed him and who were themselves recognized as religious leaders.

For a moment let us turn to other prophets of the Assyrian Age. The most creative period in the history of prophecy begins with that of Amos of Tekoa near the close of the reign of Jeroboam II of Israel (c. 750 B.C.). A few scholars go so far as to say that in a generation, Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and Micah, set forth clearly the principles of "ethical monotheism". But, although Amos, for example,

was dealing with issues of ethical consequences, careful study and interpretation of text shows undoubtedly that while Amos expanded the national-god idea, and was moving toward a cosmic conception of God, he was not an "ethical monotheist". While the truth of God's universality lay embedded in his thought, it is doubtful if even Jeremiah grasped the truth of the matter; it is conceded, however, that "Jeremiah takes the last step that needed to be taken toward ethical as well as theoretical monotheism".

From the teachings of the prophets of the Assyrian Age, nevertheless, a new interpretation of evidence was evolved from the former interpretation of the antithesis of sacrifice and obedience. Amos, although he rages and punishes, insisted that what Jahveh required of his people was not sacrifice, but Justice (v:21-24); Hosea, his contemporary, hoping and weeping, insisted that what Jahveh required of his people was not sacrifice, but Love (vi:6).

We find that Isaiah insisted that Holiness, not sacrifice, which for him was a blend of Justice and Love, was what was required (i:10-17). Although his interpretation of Holiness must be deferred until we take this conception into consideration specifically, it should be said here that while Isaiah superseded Amos and Hosea in his ethical teaching, he did not surpass Micah, who in his classical definition of religion, summed up the teachings of the three, insisting that what was needed was not sacrifice, but "to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God" (vi:6-8).

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CHAPTER i. THE EVOLUTION OF HEBRAIC TRIBAL ORGANIZATION

1. The Membership of the Early Family

No study can be made of the Social and Political Institutions of the Hebrews without taking into consideration the family, clan and tribal organizations around which society was built.

The individual constituents of the ancient family were very different from those of the family as known to us. Strickly speaking, the family as such would include "the patriarch, all his wives, his sons and their wives and their children, his daughters until they were married, and his slaves with their wives and children"¹. This unit being of the patrilineal type would be transformed into a larger unit by the death of the patriarch. Each son would thereupon become a patriarch with his own family, but the brothers would now find that they belonged to a still larger group, namely, the clan. The family ties would still remain, kinship would be there, and the blood-bond demanding that a slain member be avenged would still be in effect.

2. The Established "Fathers' House" (beth Ab)

But before we continue, it is necessary to clear up a few details. It is important to take the established "Fathers' House" (beth Ab) and determine its relationship

1. Soares, Social Institutions and Ideals of the Bible, pp.107-8.

to the next larger group of individuals, known as the "Clan". It is of interest to note here that the term "Clan" does not appear in a standard Concordance, nor does it appear in Hasting's Dictionary of the Bible. It is apparent that the Hebrew word "Mishpachah", which actually should have been translated "Clan" in the Revised Version has been translated as "Family"; hence the discrepancy disappears, as when, for example, in Judges ix:1 we read "Clan" in place of the term "Family"; thus we read:

"And Abimelech the son of Jerubbaal went unto his mother's brethern and spake with them, and with all the "clan" (family) of the house".

To digress for a moment, it is of no small significance to the careful reader that the name "Jerubbaal" just mentioned is compounded by adding the term "baal" which when used in the "family" sense refers to the "father" of the former. And it is needless to carry this further here than to remind ourselves that this use of the is a carry-over of the influence of a Caanite deity upon the Hebrews.

3. The Chieftain of the Clan

The chieftain of the clan would have been appointed from the oldest or strongest family, and naturally would have been the head of that family. Patriarchal authority would be transferred to the group of families, the head of the clan representing the group as a whole.

It is not to be supposed that such perfect homogeneity should be maintained, and consequently a stranger such as

Moses was accepted into the family of Jethro (Ex.ii:16-22).

It is to be expected that the family religion would become the religion of the new member or the new family entering the clan, and such acceptance of family religion and ceremonials would unite them and would make them of common blood. Had not a feud prevented it, such a union would have taken place between the clan of Jacob and the Shechemites (Gen.xxxiv).

4. The Development of the Hebrew Nation

It is easily shown that the "Clan" stage of organization of Hebrew families was a step toward the development of the Hebrew nation. The organization of these "fathers' houses" into "Clans" was a crude but powerful form of social control during the period covered by the Book of Judges. There was, therefore, no Hebrew nation or kingdom during that period. "In those days there was no king in Israel (Judges xxi:25).

5. The Execution of Justice

For a clear and concise statement of the method by which "justice" was meted out during this period the following quotation from Wallis is presented:

"The people were in the clan stage of social evolution at the time of the Israelite invasion of Caanan, and for a long time after. Each clan had its own leader, corresponding to the Arabian Sheikh of the present day. The clan head was a kind of arbitrator between the different families composing the association. In this character he was known as a "judge", or "shophet". This word connects with the term "shaphat", meaning to decide, to administer customary justice, or to rule. From the same origin

is derived the word "mishpat", now so familiar to us, referring to the judgment or "justice" which prevailed from time immemorial in the Israelite and other Semitic clans. In case of dispute between families, it was the duty of the "shophet" to hold a court of justice, and to decide how the clan customs found application to the matter in hand; the question being, "What was wont to be done by them of old time"? The judge was not in a place of absolute authority. His verdicts were subject to the approval of a council of elders who represented all the freemen of the families composing the clan. It is this primitive state of things that Isaiah has in mind when he says, 'I will restore thy judges, as at the first, and thy counsellors, as at the beginning' (Isaiah i:26)".²

6. The Prosecution of War

Matters of war would also be of equal importance with those of peace in the clan stage of civilization. The freemen, as has been indicated, would determine the war policy of the clan. The following quotation is an example of a situation in which a group of Israelite clans united against a number of desert clans:

Judges vi:33-35. Then all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the children of the east assembled themselves together; and they passed over, and encamped in the valley of Jezreel. But the spirit of Jehovah (Jahveh) came upon Gideon; and he blew a trumpet; and (the clan of) Abiezer was gathered together after him. And he sent messengers throughout all (the clans of) Manasseh; and they also were gathered together after him. And he sent messengers unto (the clans of) Asher, Zebulum, and Naphtali; and they came up to meet them".

2. Wallis, Sociological Study of the Bible, p. 47.

7. Unified Clan Action

But this is only a part of the story and as a result of the service rendered to a group of independent clan groups, Gideon was asked to take a greater responsibility:

Judges viii:22. Then the men of Israel said unto Gideon, Rule thou over us, both thou, thy son, and thy son's son also; for thou hast saved us out of the hand of Midian.

Another quotation from Wallis presents an excellent summary:

"Although Gideon did not become king, it was to men of his class that the people turned for leadership when the time came to unite the clans permanently into a nation. The family heads and the clan leaders owed their masterful position very largely to the terrific "strain" imposed upon society in the all-round struggle for existence in those early and stern ages of the world. The despotic power of the ancient Semitic "baal", or house father, seems excessive when viewed from the standpoint of our gentler modern civilization; but there was great need that the members of these kinship associations be disciplined by a strong hand lest they be swept out of existence by rival groups. The power of the "baal" was, in fact, a useful "function" of ancient society".³

8. The Conception of Blood Relationship Evolutionary

The term "agnation" dates from the time of the Roman jurists and there has been much discussion as to the meaning of the term. The solution of the problem is effected by bringing together agnation and the domestic religion. As we have seen, religion was transmitted from male to male, and

3. Wallis, Sociological Study of the Bible, p. 48.

so it was that the jurists found that men were "agnates" when they could trace relationship from male to male, and thus had common ancestry. There was then a close correlation between religion and relationship, and the principle of kinship was the same in each.

However a time came when the relationship of worship was no longer the only kind considered. Thus it was that the old religion lost its significance and blood relationship was more widely accepted and relationship by birth was legally recognized. Accordingly the name "agnation" was given to this newly recognized relationship, which was not in accordance with the rules of domestic religion.⁴

4. Fustel, The Ancient City, p. 75.

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CHAPTER ii ANCIENT RELIGION AS A PART OF THE SOCIAL ORDER

1. Influence of Traditional Religion

It is significant that the three great religions that have their origins among the Semites are positive in that their founders deliberately departed from the traditions of the past and spoke as the organs of a divine revelation. To understand any one of these religions we must discover that none of them ever started with a tabula rosa and then suddenly expressed itself for the first time. Consequently, to understand it in its historical origin and form, we must know the traditional religion that preceded it. A prophet such as Isaiah, therefore, can find a hearing only by appealing to religious instincts that already exist, and by speaking a language which men accustomed to these old forms can understand.

2. The Characteristics of Ancient Religion

Thus it was that traditions and usage furnish a barrier over which the prophet must project his principles. This constituted one of the difficulties in drawing a clear distinction between the religion of the foreign gods and that of Jahveh. In this old religion we find certain beliefs and institutions, ritual practices and rules of conduct; however, as we shall see, there was little comparable to what we know as creed; the antique religion consisted almost

entirely of practices and institutions. It has been said that the rite was connected, not with a dogma, but rather with a myth. Thus it was that while the practice was rigidly fixed, the meaning of the rite was explained by different people in different ways, and the attached meaning became very vague. And so long as a man followed prescribed forms, no questions were asked regarding his religious beliefs or how they might affect his life.

3. The Importance of Ritual and Traditional Usage

It has been shown that in the study of ancient religions we must study ritual and traditional usage, rather than mythology, because the latter had no sacred sanction and therefore no binding force on the worshippers. This leads us to a very important point of view, namely, that the myth was derived from the ritual and not the ritual from the myth; consequently the ritual was fixed and the myth varied from time to time or from person to person. At first sight this leads to a rather unique situation in that religious institutions become older than religious theories and therefore practice preceded doctrinal theory. Consequently we are led to conclude that a prime requisite for ancient religion was a practical knowledge of the rules on which the deity acts, and therefore what the gods are in themselves is not a religious question, but rather a speculative one. Conduct is based, then, on proper ritualistic observation.

4. The Function of Ancient Religion

Accepting this, one discovers that religion of

this nature existed for the preservation and welfare of society rather than for spiritual development or the strengthening of personality. Isaiah, as we shall see, had to face this situation squarely and to break with ritualistic observation was equivalent to retreating from the domestic and political community of which he was a member. Thus it is that ancient religion was but a part of the general social order which was composed of both men and gods alike. In addition, it is to be noted here that the language of human relationship was used to express the situation existing between the gods of antiquity and their worshippers - as we shall see the language was not taken figuratively, but rather strictly literally.

Thus it was that in small communities the first steps of social and religious development are observed. Their political system was based on the principle of kinship mainly held together by the tie of blood, the social bond which at that time had absolute and undisputed strength, being enforced by the law of blood revenge.

5. Semitic Religious Development Retarded

Down to the eighth century B.C. the religion of the Semites ran almost parallel to that of the Aryans, but at this time the northern Semites were deprived of political independence by the Assyrian monarchs, who went on from conquest to conquest until all of Syria and Palestine went down under them. The destructiveness of the conquerors dissolved the structure of this Semitic ancient society. On the other hand, Nature barred the way for progress of the

nomadic Arabs, hemmed in as they were by the wilderness of rock and sand, which did not furnish material conditions for advance beyond the tribal system. From what has been said above, it is evident that their religious development would have been retarded proportionally.

6. Advent of "Particularism"

Since the ancient Semitic communities were very small and were separated by incessant feuds it can be seen readily that the relationship between gods and their worshippers would cause a kind of particularism characteristic of political society to appear in their religion. This kind of particularism led to the unfortunate system whereby a man is held accountable to his god for a wrong done to a member of his own kindred or political community, but at the same time is free to rob or kill an alien. Likewise the god of a clan or town was an enemy of the enemies of his worshippers.

The indestructible bond that united a worshipper to his god was of the same nature as the blood-fellowship which in early society united man and man, and thereby was of the nature of a moral obligation. This definitely leads to the fact that in earliest times religion was a moral force, though narrow and selfish, and that the fear of the gods was a motive to enforce the social laws which were also laws of morality. The weakness of this system lay in the fact that ethical standards were thus made static by adherence to those of a past social order.

7. Conception of Divine Authority Introduced

It may seem that the conception of the tribal

god as father implies that the idea of divine authority is introduced into the religion. This implication cannot be sustained in light of the fact that the authority of the father could go no farther than the whole kin desired to support it. There were important shifts made as a result of the conception of the fatherhood of the tribal god. As a consequence, the children definitely became members of the father's clan for all purposes of inheritance and duties of blood and the independent divine mother became the subordinate partner of a male god, as Ishtar reappeared in Caanan, and elsewhere as Astarte, wife of the supreme Baal. In Southern Arabia Ishtar was too powerful to be subjugated, but did submit to having her sex changed, and was accordingly transformed into the masculine 'Athtar. It must be added here that often the above-mentioned shift was not made, and accordingly the goddess protected, in the name of religion, some aspects of the sexual license of savage society.

8. The Conception of the One True God

As a brief summary of the genetic exposition of development of Semitic religion to this point, two fundamental principles seem to have developed, namely, that the worshippers relied upon their god as king for help against their enemies, counsel by oracles or soothsayers in matters of national difficulty, and a sentence of justice when a case was too hard for human decision. It has been said that he was to be present in time of trouble, but was not expected

to be constantly righting human affairs.

It may appear that there is a natural tendency for Semitic religion to move towards ethical monotheism; it seems that this is little more than a consequence of the alliance of religion with monarchy. However, the conception of ethical monotheism as it was slowly evolved by the Hebrew prophets was characterized by the conceiving of the one true God as the King of Absolute Justice, who was the national God of Israel, and who, because of his perfect justice, would eventually win the homage of all peoples. Thus it was that the prophets kept in touch with the earlier established ideas and institutions of the Semitic race, providing a situation which was understandable to people accustomed to rituals and practices characteristic of their socio-religious institutions.

The significance of this conception of the God of Absolute Righteousness or Justice as stated by the prophets was based on a deep-seated protest against the narrowness of a purely national religion. It is demonstrable that this advance in religion was not due to speculation since the idea of creation did not become important in Hebrew thought until the period of 11 Isaiah in the Sixth Century B.C.¹

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the above chapter. Pages 1-83 are
of especial importance.

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 Part ii Chapter iii The Religion
 of Caanan, pp.154ff.
- OLMSTEAD, History of Palestine and Syria
 Chapter iii Arab Tribesmen pp.35-42.
- SMITH, G.A., The Book of Isaiah
 Chapter v The World in Isaiah's Day and
 Israel's God, pp.95ff.
- SMITH, W.R., Lectures on the Religion of the Semites
 Lecture i Introduction: The Subject and
 Method of Inquiry, pp.1ff.
 Lecture ii The Nature of the Religious
 Community, and the Relation of the
 Gods to the Worshipers, pp. 28ff.
 Lecture vi Sacrifice - Preliminary
 Survey, pp. 213ff.

CHAPTER iii POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT OF ISAIAH

1. Introduction

It is an important piece of indirect evidence that shows the significance of the political set-up of the period of Isaiah, namely, that he dates his "call" by the death of King Uzziah (Isaiah vi:1). With the help of the Assyrian Monuments, this date is fixed at 740 B.C. This serves as an introduction to the strong condemnation which Isaiah utters in some of his most important and hence far-reaching prophecies. But before taking up a study of the nature of Isaiah's attitude toward his political and social inheritance, let us briefly survey the political conditions as they existed just prior to his "call". For this particular evidence we shall turn to "extra-Isaianic" sources, later turning to Isaiah for his evidence of the situation.

It is of moment here that we have evidence from the Cuneiform Inscriptions of Assyria relating to the activities of the Assyrian kings which constituted an important developmental influence on the political situation of Judah from the north-east. The influence of the Egyptian Empire, although of significance in Judah at an earlier period, is not of importance again until the period contemporary with Isaiah, and will be discussed in that connection.

2. Pre-Isaianic History

It is an established fact that prior to the eighth

century B.C. the kingdoms of Israel and Judah had not effectively been harassed by an external power, although they had experienced the expected conflicts with one another and with surrounding countries. With the advent on the horizon of political forces of the Assyrian Empire seers and prophets began to see new troubles brewing from the northeast. And, it may be noted here, it became so great an omen later that Isaiah saw that this growing Assyrian Empire would later challenge the Egyptian Empire, and that the battle between the two would spell disaster for both Israel and Judah inasmuch as they would be the buffer between the two empires on which the war would be fought - and he further saw that to ally with either side would create even greater danger. From this foresight on the part of Isaiah was developed his conceptions of political alliances which brought forth two of the greatest prophecies of his career, namely, those dealing with the Syro-Ephraimitish War.

During the early part of the reign of Uzziah in Judah the Assyrians were weakened by attacks of the plague (Amos iv:10) and the outlook for Judah was brighter, when, in 745, near the end of the reign of King Uzziah, the ascension to the Assyrian throne of Tiglath-Pileser III brought about renewed apprehension on the part of the Judeans. And it was five years later (740) that Isaiah received his "call".

Thus the introduction of the reign of Tiglath-Pileser III in Assyria (745-728) brings us to a consideration of history contemporary with Isaiah's period of prophecy (740-700).

3. History Contemporary with Isaiah

It appears to have been one of the great prophets, Amos, who first saw the danger appearing from the northeast, for he has said:

vi:14 For, behold, I will raise up against you a nation, O house of Israel, saith Jehovah (Jahveh), the Gof of hosts; that they shall afflict you from the entrance of Hamath unto the brook of the Arabah.

In spite of Amos' declaration, it is evident that the respective king of both Israel and Judah first attempted to strengthen his hold on his kingdom by asking for help from Assyria, to which empire was paid a large sum of money levied by taxes. The method used by Menahem, King of Israel (738), is recorded as follows:

ii Kings, xv:15-19 Then came against the land Pul¹, the king of Assyria; and Menahem gave Pul a thousand talents of silver, that his hand might be with him to confirm the kingdom in his hand.

xv:20 And Menahem exacted the money of Israel, even of all the mighty men of wealth, of each man fifty shekels of silver, to give to the king of Assyria. So the king of Assyria turned back, and stayed not there in the land.

Such a policy on the part of a ruler could but cause the stronger ruler of the time to covet the wealth of the country buying protection, and Hosea (750-735) saw the inevitable effects when he said:

1. Regarding the name Pul, Driver, Isaiah: His Life and Times, page 7, states: "Pul is but another name of the same king who is called elsewhere Tiglath-Pileser. I further identify this Tiglath-Pileser as Tiglath-Pileser III".

Hosea viii:9 For they are gone up to Assyria, like a wild ass alone by himself; Ephraim hath hired lovers.

viii:10 Yea, though they hire among the nations, now I will gather them: and they begin to be diminished by reason of the burden of the king of princes.

Let us turn for a further consideration of the activities of Tiglath-Pileser III during the period just prior to Isaiah's "call". This has been concisely stated by Driver:²

Tiglath-Pileser's reign extended from B.C. 745 to 728, its termination thus nearly synchronizing with the accession of Hezekiah in Judah. Almost in his first year he was engaged in a successful campaign in Babylonia, which was quickly followed by other expeditions in the direction of Media and Armenia. In 742 he marched against Arpad, in Syria; and after a siege of three years succeeded in reducing it (B.C. 740). To the same period, probably belongs his reduction of the little kingdom of Hamath, a place not far distant from Arpad, and named beside it more than once in the Old Testament. Tiglath-Pileser's notice of this success is interesting on account of its containing a name which can hardly be any other than that of Uzziah (or, as he is called in II Kings, Azariah) of Judah: 'Nine-teen districts of the city of Hamath, together with the towns round about them, which are by the sea of the setting of the sun, which in their faithlessness had made revolt to Azri-yahu, to the territory of Assyria I annexed; my officers, my deputies, I appointed over them' ".

4. Syro-Ephraimitish War

a. Warning from Isaiah

The background of the historical situation

2. Driver, Isaiah: His Life and Times, page 7.

in and about Judah up to the advent of Isaiah has been very briefly presented, but adequate to introduce the first great political crisis in Judah at the beginning of Isaiah's activity, namely, the Syro-Ephraimitish War.

Of the two instances mentioned above in which the respective king of both Israel and Judah invited the Assyrian King to help him strengthen his hold on his respective country, we are here to present data concerning the overtures of the second of the two, namely, those made by Ahaz of Judah to Tiglath-Pileser III. And for the presentation of this evidence, the testimony from Isaiah is first introduced, showing that the prophet tried desperately to show the fallacy of such a move to King Ahaz:

Isaiah vii:3 Then said Jehovah(Jahveh) unto Isaiah, Go forth now to meet Ahaz, thou, and Shear-jashub thy son, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool, in the highway of the fuller's field;

4 and say unto him, Take heed, and be quiet; fear not, neither let thy heart be faint, because of these two tails of smoking firebrands, for the fierce anger of Rezin and Syria, and of the son of Remaliah.

5 Because Syria, Ephraim, and the son of Remaliah, have purposed evil against thee, saying,

6 Let us go up against Judah, and vex it, and let us make a breach therein for us, and set up a king in the midst of it, even the son of Tabeel;

7 Thus saith the Lord Jehovah (Jahveh), It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass.

b. The Fearlessness of Isaiah

This is ample evidence of the depth of vision of the prophet Isaiah regarding the problems of political alliance with stronger powers. Isaiah sets forth his conviction with clarity and firmness, in direct contradiction to that characteristic of Ahaz, who in the words of Isaiah, trembled:

Isaiah vii:1 And it came to pass in the days of Ahaz, the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, that Resin the king of Syria, and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, went up to Jerusalem to war against it, but could not prevail against it.

2 And it was told the house of David, saying, Syria is confederate with Ephraim. And his heart trembled, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the forest tremble with the wind.

Of such stuff was the personality of Ahaz. But not so with Isaiah, the man who could stand up and speak his mind, condemning institutions and practices, as well as political opponents, without fear or favor. And so it is that we can easily visualize Isaiah meeting with Ahaz "at the end of the conduit of the upper pool", pleading with this timid and frightened ruler that he should make no alliance with a foreign power which could not stand. But the advice of Isaiah fell on deaf ears and a weak heart, as is recorded in:

ii Kings xvi:7 So Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria, saying, I am thy servant and thy son;

come up, and save me out of the hand of the king of Syria, and out of the hand of the king of Israel, who rise up against me.

xvi:8 And Ahaz took the silver and gold that was found in the house of Jehovah (Jahveh), and in the treasures of the king's house, and sent it for a present to the king of Assyria.

xvi:9 And the king of Assyria hearkened unto him; and the king of Assyria went up against Damascus, and took it, and carried the people of it captive to Kir, and slew Resin.

(Calculated from data in the Inscriptions, the siege of Damascus took place in 734)³

It is unquestionable that Isaiah saw the injustice and humiliation imposed upon a neighboring state by the selfish political move of Ahaz which caused the destruction of innocent people. The entire situation, in the eyes of Isaiah, is similiar to that perpetrated by Menahem of Israel in 738.

5. The Sign of Immanuel

In true prophetic fashion Isaiah emphatically has put his predictions in the Mouth of the Lord by prefixing "Thus saith Jehovah (Jahveh)" to his declarations, but even this is of no significance to the weak and trembling Ahaz. Isaiah has to go even farther in his attempt to convince Ahaz of his political errors, and states that Jahveh will give a sign, the sign of Immanuel:

Isaiah vii:14 Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign; behold,

a virgin shall conceive, and bear
a son, and shall call his name
Immanuel.

This sign of Immanuel deserves interpretation, for therein is couched one of the most fundamental and probably the least understood of Isaiah's concepts. It is the opinion of this writer that we must not accept the conventional interpretation of this sign as forecasting the Birth and Life of Jesus of Nazareth which was to come three hundred years later, but rather we must rely upon the interpretation derived as the result of higher criticism. Thus briefly stated, the proposition is that Isaiah had in mind the advent of a just and righteous earthly ruler who would govern his state or nation accordingly, whereas it is to be understood Jesus refused to accept lordship over an earthly kingdom, but rather emphasized a heavenly kingdom with God as Father.

6. Isaiah's Conception of Ideal Political Government

This conclusion regarding the belief and expectancy of Isaiah needs some substantiation, and briefly summarized, the evidence is of a purely political nature, representing Isaiah's loftiest conception of political government, and thereby placing him the foremost statesman of his time. The evidence generally is substantiated by a genetic study of the socio-religious institutions and practices of his day, the general basis of which has been presented in a previous chapter. The interpretation of his sign, in the light of a preceding chapter, is as follows:

Isaiah recognized the weakness and folly of King Ahaz and under such a king certainly expected Jahveh to destroy the kingdom, as is evidenced by:

Isaiah vii:15 Butter and honey shall he eat, when he knoweth to refuse the evil, and choose the good.

vii:16 For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land whose two kings thou abhorrest shall be forsaken.

vii:17 Jehovah (Jahveh) will bring upon thee, and upon thy people, and upon thy father's house, days that have not come, from the day that Ephraim departed from Judah - even the king of Assyria.

vii:23 And it shall come to pass in that day, that every place, where there were a thousand vines at a thousand silverlings, shall be for briars and thorns.

Conversely, the above evidence leads to the tacit assumption that Jahveh would reward that kingdom whose king was righteous in his sight by giving that which he would remove as a result of the reign of an unrighteous king. So it is that the nature of the king directly influences the well-being of his kingdom; consequently what Isaiah understood to be required and for which he was looking was a king who would be "Immanuel", a purely earthly personage, for in the light of existing socio-religious institutions, an institution could not be separated from a personality - of such a nature were the heads of families.

To substantiate this, we have the "words" of David to show that an ideal kingdom must accordingly have an ideal

king, as recorded in:

ii Sam. xxiii:3 The God of Israel said,
The Rock of Israel spake to me:
One that ruleth over men righteously,
That ruleth in the fear of God.

xxiii:4 He shall be as the
light of the morning, when the sun riseth,
A morning without clouds,
When the tender grass springeth out of
the earth,
Though clear shining after rain.

As has been intimated, Isaiah presents herewith a new conception of God, of righteousness and justice, and this is to be elaborated upon in following chapters dealing with his social and religious reforms. But to summarize his concept of the Ideal Ruler, Immanuel, who should reign in Justice and Righteousness, leading the people to their Maker, and not from Him, no better evidence could be quoted than that offered by Isaiah:

Isaiah vii:6 For unto us a child is born,
unto us a son is given; and the
government shall be upon his shoulders:
and his name shall be called Wonderful,
Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting
Father, Prince of Peace.

vii:7 Of the increase of his
government and of peace there shall be
no end, upon the throne of David, and
upon his kingdom, to establish it, and
to uphold it with justice and with
righteousness from henceforth even for
ever. The zeal of Jehovah (Jahveh) of
hosts will perform this.

Thus it is that Isaiah's Immanuel is a temporal ruler as seen in the historical setting of the times of Isaiah, but in addition a ruler who embodies the four Attributes

enumerated - a political concept of the highest quality.

7. An Interim

a. Israel, Judah and Syria in Serious Circumstances

As a result of the Syro-Ephraimitish War, which, according to the Inscriptions, ended in 734, we find Israel and Judah in serious circumstances:

ii Kings xv:29 In the days of Pekah king of Israel came Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria, and took Ijon, and Abel-beth-maacah, and Janoah, and Kedesh, and Hazor, and Gilead, and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali; and he carried them captive to Assyria.

xv:30 And Hoshea the son of Elah made a conspiracy against Pekah the son of Remaliah, and smote him, and slew him, and reigned in his stead, in the twentieth year of Jotham the son of Uzziah.

That Syria was in a similiar predicament has been already shown in the quotation from ii Kings xvi:9. pertaining to the fall of Damascus in which:

"- - - the king of Assyria went up against Damascus, and took it, and carried the people of it captive to Kir, and slew Rezin".

b. Fall of Samaria in 722

Tiglath-Pileser died in 727 and the next event of significance here is the fall of Samaria in 722 during the first year of the reign of the Assyrian king Sargon II, who succeeded Shalmaneser IV. The Assyrian suzerainty was not firmly established however, and revolt and conspiracy gradually began to manifest itself. The

policy of neutrality in regard to national policies was again being flaunted by the desire on the part of some Judeans to ally themselves with Egypt, the empire whose ruler saw the advantage, as has been previously mentioned, in having Israel and Judah serve as buffer states between them and the Assyrian Empire.

8. Isaiah's Attitude Toward "Inviolability" of the Temple

This situation as recognized by Isaiah brings us to the consideration of a generally accepted principle of a socio-religious nature which is completely flouted by Isaiah in his refutation of the commonly accepted doctrine of the inviolability of the temple at Jerusalem which is discussed in a later chapter. Recognizing the folly of relying upon the promises of Egypt, he prophesies as follows:

Isaiah xxviii:15 Because ye have said,
We have made a covenant with death,
and with Sheol are we at agreement;
when the overflowing scourge shall
pass through, it shall not come unto
us; for we have made lies our refuge,
and under falsehood have we hid
ourselves:

Isaiah xx:4 so shall the king of
Assyria lead away the captives of
Egypt, and the exiles of Ethiopia,
young and old, naked and barefoot,
and with buttocks uncovered, to the
shame of Egypt.

xx:5 And they shall be dis-
mayed and confounded, because of
Ethiopia their expectation, and of
Egypt their glory.

But there is a distinct positive side to the attitude

taken by Isaiah, as is exemplified in:

Isaiah xxviii:16 therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah (Jahveh), behold I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone of sure foundation: he that believeth shall not be in haste.

xxviii:17 And I will make justice the line, and righteousness the plummet; and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place.

Such is the nature of the attitude taken by Isaiah during the reign of Sargon, his political policy being that entangling alliances be averted, and that Jerusalem would be saved and a righteous government would be established when no longer:

Isaiah xxviii:7 And even these reel with wine, and stagger with strong drink; the priest and the prophet reel with strong drink, they are swallowed up with wine, they stagger with strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment.

xxviii:8 For all tables are full of vomit and filthiness, so that no place is clean.

9. The Ascension of Hezekiah to the Judean Kingship

For a moment let us turn to a consideration of affairs in Judah as a result of the ascension of King Hezekiah upon the death of Ahaz (721). The picture as presented above is not as dark as it first appears, for in Hezekiah is found a monarch who approximates the ideal expressed by Isaiah's conception of Immanuel. Were it not for the fact that Hezekiah had been born before its

presentation, it is very likely that tradition would have had it that Hezekiah fulfilled the prophecy. Suffice it to say here that Hezekiah was a public-spirited man who efficiently handled municipal improvements (ii Kings xx:20), state affairs (ii Kings xx:13), and the cultural conditions (Isaiah xxxix:9-20) of his kingdom. He is credited with a reformation in religious practice, and thus was going in the direction definitely taken by King Josiah much later:

ii Kings xviii:3 And he did that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah (Jahveh), according to all that David his father had done.

xviii:4 He removed the high places, and brake the pillars, and cut down the Asherah: and he brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made; for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it; and he called it Nehushtan.

xxviii:5 He trusted in Jehovah (Jahveh), the God of Israel; so that after him was none like among all kings, nor among them that were before him.

This brief presentation of the king Hezekiah has been offered as an introduction to the momentous event in Judean history which is now to be considered, namely, the return of the Assyrian Empire as a direct and powerful motive force in the personage of King Sennacherib, the successor of Sargon in 705.

10. Sennacherib's Invasion

a. Introduction

It is a trite saying that coming events

cast their shadows before their arrival. This is true to the degree that an individual is capable of seeing potential influence of present activity or inactivity. Isaiah, it has been shown, had a keen eye for seeing just such implications, and with his patience and long-time view of the nature of history, stood for right action leading toward a goal of ultimate good, never allowing himself to be swayed by a method which would bring immediate security, but would inevitably result in surrender or destruction.

No time had been more dangerous and difficult for Isaiah to follow this principle than the invasion by Sennacherib presented. That Isaiah did not falter during this first attack (702) is clearly recorded in Chapters xxix-xxxii of Isaiah, whereas we look elsewhere for his data regarding the attack of 701.

Immediately upon the death of Sargon the outlying states of the Assyrian Empire began to strive for independence, and Sennacherib was active in reuniting and strengthening his eastern principalities until 702, when it became evident that intrigue and rebellion had also been brewing in Palestine. Egypt was again in the background, making the accustomed enticing promises of support which were again both false and dangerous in the eyes of Isaiah, as recorded in Chapters xxx-xxxi.

b. Isaiah Again Condemns Political Alliance

Isaiah had already seen the shadow of the

impending event, and now sees an invasion by Sennacherib within a year (701). He prophesies near destruction of Jerusalem and a quick retreat on the part of the attacking forces (xxix:1-8). And in this connection, he condemns the sacrificial ritual (xxix:15) as practiced by the people in lieu of accepting Isaiah's loftier conception of the relationship which should exist between Jahveh and his worshippers; the moral import of this conception is to be discussed in a following chapter.

The prophecy dealing with political alliance with a foreign power rather than trusting in the power of Jahveh is clearly stated again at this time:

Isaiah xxxi:1 Woe to them that go
down to Egypt for help, and rely
on horses, and trust in chariots
because they are many, and in horse-
men because they are very strong,
but they look not unto the Holy
One of Israel, neither seek
Jehovah (Jahveh)!

xxxi:3 Now the Egyptians
are men, and not God; and their
horses flesh and not spirit: and
when Jehovah (Jahveh) shall stretch
out his hand, both he that helpeth
shall stumble, and he that is helped
shall fall, and they all shall be
consumed together.

c. Isaiah Offers Hope

Could Isaiah have been more explicit in presenting his belief that not a political alliance with Egypt, but rather a proper appreciation and worship of Jahveh should save Jerusalem. Again an immediate substitute

for power through unrighteous alliance could but bring about defeat and decay over a period of time. This doctrine is firmly clinched in his statement in which Jahveh outwits the foremost politicians of the time:

Isaiah xxix:14 therefore, behold,
I will proceed to do a marvelous
work among this people, even a
marvelous work and a wonder; and
the wisdom of their wise men shall
perish, and the understanding of
their prudent men shall be hid.

And so it is that Isaiah does not leave the picture one of darkness and hopelessness, but rather looks forward to a day when the nation shall be saved in spite of the intriguing politicians who unsuccessfully attempt to make themselves secure by means unacceptable to Jahveh.

11. Sennacherib and Jerusalem, 701 B.C.

a. Introduction

As the Assyrian King Sennacherib swept in upon Judah in 701 we see the approach of the critical moment in the life of Isaiah, and his teachings are thereby crystallized so as to become evident and meaningful to the blindest of his contemporaries. As has been indicated, his life-long leadership had been of a moral and political nature based upon the firm belief that a proper worship of Jahveh together with a right attitude toward their fellow men would forestall complete destruction of Jerusalem and consequent termination of God's people.

The historical facts surrounding this siege of Jeru-

salem are satisfactorily preserved in Biblical and Assyrian sources and the two are in sufficient agreement to permit what may be considered to be a satisfactory understanding of the events of the time.

It is generally accepted that Sennacherib made but one attack upon Judah and it was at this time that he laid waste many of the cities of the kingdom, threatening Jerusalem twice, sparing the city in the first instance when a tribute was paid to the Assyrian king for its preservation (Isaiah i and xxii). Immediately upon his departure from the city on his way to attack Egypt, Sennacherib apparently resented his leaving Jerusalem intact, and sent his lieutenant Rabshakeh back with a horde to persuade the inhabitants imprisoned within the walled city to desert Hezekiah and Isaiah (Isaiah xxxiii; xxxvi:2; xxxviii). It was at this time that the city was saved, as predicted by Isaiah, by an "act of Jahveh".

b. Isaiah's Leadership

Critical study, as has been already indicated, places the first and twenty-second chapters of Isaiah together, each dealing with Sennacherib's impending invasion, and representing conditions as they were in 702. The moral aspect of the situation is vigorously emphasized in chapter i and the real import of his prophecy must be reserved for a later chapter; suffice it to say here that Isaiah emphatically condemned the sacrificial ritual as used in the

worship of Jahveh (Isaiah i:11-15). It has been shown previously that Isaiah condemned the political alliances whereby the nation tried to forestall its destruction. His denunciation of these two factors relied upon by his contemporaries in Judah made him the outstanding moral and political leader that he was. But this was not the termination of Isaiah's ability as a leader - he summed up his doctrine and gave it life, making it effective, by presenting a lofty and rational conception of Jahveh, which it has been shown, far surpassed any conception presented prior to that time, notwithstanding the valuable contributions of the Prophets Amos and Hosea. A more complete evaluation of this contribution is reserved for a following chapter.

At last the citizens within the wall of Jerusalem saw the futility of expecting to capitalize upon the desired aid from Egypt, and as might be expected, lost their faith in their religious hope with the failure of their political hope. With faith in neither of these, the populace presented Isaiah with the greatest problem of his time.

12. Isaiah Confronts New Problems

a. "Eat and drink for tomorrow we die"

Isaiah's immediate problem no longer was concerned with the abstract, but was rather reduced to a practical, concrete situation which demanded action. He consequently took occasion to condemn the utter hopelessness and frivolity resulting from failure of Egyptian help:

Isaiah xxii:12 And in that day did the Lord, Jehovah (Jahveh) of hosts, call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth:

xxii:13 and, behold, joy and gladness, slaying oxen and killing sheep, eating flesh and drinking wine: Let us eat and drink for tomorrow we shall die.

xxii:14 And Jehovah (Jahveh) of hosts revealed himself in mine ears, Surely this iniquity shall not be forgiven you till ye die, saith the Lord, Jehovah (Jahveh) of hosts.

b. Removal of Shebna

Secondly, he demonstrated his hope and faith in the future by effecting a positive political policy which removed from the Jerusalem political circle an office-holder of questionable honesty and capacity:

Isaiah xxii:15 Thus saith the Lord, Jehovah (Jahveh) of hosts, Go, get thee unto this treasurer, even unto Shebna, who is over the house, and say,

xxii:16 What doest thou here? and whom hast thou here, that thou hast hewn thee out here a sepulchre? hewing him out a sepulchre on high, gravating a habitation for himself in the rock!

xxii:17 Behold, Jehovah (Jahveh), like a strong man, will hurl thee away violently; yea, he will wrap thee up closely.

xxii:18 He will surely wind thee round and round, and toss you

like a ball into a large country;
there shalt thou die, and there
shall be the chariots of thy glory,
thou shame of thy lord's house.

xxii:19 And I will
thrust thee from thine office;
and from thy station shalt thou
be pulled down.

c. Warning Concerning Political Nepotism

As successor to Shebna, who apparently was a foreigner and man without a family, Isaiah appointed Eliakim. The appointee was a man with family connections and George Adam Smith³ sees as a result of this, Isaiah prophesying a warning that even the strongest political leader will fall should he ignore the dangers of nepotism. That such was the outcome for Eliakim is evidenced in:

Isaiah xxii:23 And I will fasten
him as a nail in a sure place; and
he shall be for a throne of glory
to his father's house.

xxii:24 And they shall hang
upon him all the glory of his father's
house, the offspring and the issue,
every small vessel, from the cups
even to all the flagons.

xxii:25 In that day, saith
Jehovah (Jahveh) of hosts, shall the
nail that was fastened in a sure
place give way; and it shall be
hewn down, and fall; and the burden
that was upon it shall be cut off;
for Jehovah (Jahveh) hath spoken it.

The interpretation given the above by George Adam Smith⁴ is as follows:

" - - - but Eliakim's family seem

3 and 4 Smith, The Book of Isaiah, vol. 1, page 318.

to have taken advantage of their relative's position, and either at the time he was designated, or more probably later, Isaiah wrote two sentences of warning upon the dangers of nepotism. - - - Isaiah reminds the much-encumbered statesman that the firmest peg will give way if you hang too much upon it, the strongest man be pulled down by his dependent and indolent family".

13. The Arrival of Rabshakeh: His Tactics

Let us turn for a survey of the results of this conflict of political intrigue and ritualistic worship of Jahveh as over against the high idealism of Isaiah as evidenced by the return of the Assyrian hosts to Jerusalem under the leadership of Rabshakeh after Hezekiah supposedly had purchased immunity by paying tribute to Sennacherib (Isaiah, Chapters i and xxii).

That Rabshakeh was a man of no mean political ability in the type of chicanery which he presented to the Judeans within the walls of Jerusalem cannot be denied. His line of argument hinged directly upon the two factors of political and religious debate which separated Isaiah from his people:

Isaiah xxxvi:4 And Rabshakeh said unto them, Say ye now to Hezekiah, Thus saith the great king, the king of Assyria, What confidence is this wherein thou trustest?

xxxvi:5 I say, thy counsel and strength for the war are but vain words: now on whom dost thou trust, that thou hast rebelled against me?

xxxvi:6 Behold, thou trusteth

upon the staff of this bruised reed, even upon Egypt, whereon if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it: so is Pharoah king of Egypt to all that trust on him.

This challenge of the validity of trusting upon Egypt is followed by a passage in which Rabshakeh tries to undermine the religious faith held by the populace and that proposed by Isaiah:

Isaiah xxxvi:7 But if thou say unto me, We trust in Jehovah (Jahveh) our God: is it not that he, whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah hath taken away, and hath said to Judah and to Jerusalem, Ye shall worship before the altar?

xxxvi:8 Now therefore, I pray thee, give pledges to my master the king of Assyria, and I will give thee two thousand horses, if thou be able on thy part to set riders upon them.

xxxvi:16 Hearken not to Hezekiah: for thus saith the king of Assyria, Make your peace with me, and come out to me; and eat ye every one of his vine, and every one of his fig-tree, and drink ye every one the waters of his own cistern:

xxxvi:17 until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of grain and new wine, a land of bread and vineyards.

xxxvi:18 Beware lest Hezekiah persuade you, saying Jehovah (Jahveh) will deliver us. Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered his land out of the king of Assyria.

14. The Supreme Test of Isaiah's Political Leadership

Could a more enticing promise and satisfactory outlook for the immediate future have been made to a little group of people besieged within a city wall by so powerful an army. Who but Isaiah could stem the tide with such forces at work - that of a powerful army on the outside and that of a weak, trembling and fearful king on the inside?

The fact that the little group was held together in view of the danger and circumstances brings to a climax the supreme qualities of the political leadership exemplified by Isaiah in 701 B.C.:

Isaiah xxxvii:5 So the servants of king Hezekiah came to Isaiah.

xxxvii:6 And Isaiah said unto them, Thus shall ye say to your master, Thus saith Jehovah (Jahveh), Be not afraid of the words that thou hast heard, wherewith the servants of the king of Assyria has blasphemed me.

Not a trace of weakening on the part of Isaiah under these trying circumstances - he is still proclaiming his conception of the power of Jahveh to successfully end the trying times, thus saving a Remnant (Isaiah xxxvii:31) from which the future Judah shall be derived! Isaiah goes so far as to prefix the statement with "Thus saith Jehovah (Jahveh)":

Isaiah xxxvii:7 Behold, I will put a spirit in him, and he shall hear tidings, and shall return unto his own land: and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.

Rabshakeh used no force and in the words of Driver⁵:

" - - - the measures of the Rabshakeh were entirely ineffectual. The troops at his disposal were apparently not sufficiently numerous to enforce submission, and he was obliged to return to his royal master with the report that his mission had proved unsuccessful".

No sooner had Rabshakeh returned than Sennacherib made his final decision to bring Jerusalem under his control (Isaiah xxvi:10ff). Upon the arrival of this latest plan of Sennacherib in the form of a letter to the king, Hezekiah "spread it before Jehovah (Jahveh)" (Isaiah xxxvii:14).

The answer to this trying situation came back defiantly from Isaiah pre-fixed with the statement:

Isaiah xxxvii:22 this is the word which Jehovah (Jahveh) hath spoken concerning him:

xxxvii:31 And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward.

xxxvii:32 For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and out of Mount Zion they shall escape. The zeal of Jehovah (Jahveh) of hosts will perform this.

xxxvii:33 Therefore thus saith Jehovah (Jahveh) concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come unto this city, nor shoot an arrow there, neither shall he come before it with shield, nor cast up a mount against it.

xxxvii:34 By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and he shall not come up to this city, saith Jehovah (Jahveh).

5. Driver, Isaiah: His Life and Times, p. 79.

xxxvii:35 For I will defend
this city to save it, for
mine own sake, and for my
servant David's sake.

The more diligently the opposing forces played upon
Isaiah, the more firmly he stood and the clearer he saw
that which was right in the eyes of Jahveh:

Isaiah xxxvii:36 And the angel
of Jehovah (Jahveh) went forth,
and smote the Assyrian a hundred
and four score and five thousand;
and when men arose early in the
morning, behold these were all
dead bodies.

xxxvii:37 So Sennacherib
king of Assyria departed, and
went and returned, and dwelt at
Ninevah.

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CHAPTER iv ISAIAH A SOCIAL LEADER

I. Introduction

It is likely that Isaiah gave attention to social reforms during his entire period of activity, but there are four problems brought out in the early part of his ministry which were called to public attention during the reign of Jotham. These are recorded in his prophecies beginning Isaiah ii:5. Summarized, these problems relate (1) to the proper use and distribution of the land (Isaiah v:8); (2) to the liquor question (v:11); (3) to the mismanagement of country and the oppression of the poor (iii:13-15) and (4) to the legislators

Isaiah x:1 - - - that decree
unrighteous decrees, and to the
writers who write perverseness;

x:2 to turn aside the
needy from justice, and to rob
the poor of my people of their
right, that widows may be their
spoil, and that they may make
the fatherless their prey.

Of great significance is the third section of the above summary, namely, Isaiah iii:13-15, in which case he puts the words as coming from the Lord. Consequently he has connected ethical meanings with the conception of holiness and glory and by so doing makes a real contribution to Hebrew moral development.

2. "Land Grabbers" Condemned

Let us turn to another prophecy which is an indictment filled with condemnation, namely, that beginning in Isaiah v:8. After a very effective theme of reciting a story of a "friend" and his vineyard, Isaiah makes a powerful plea to the upper classes of Judah (see contemporary prophecy in Micah, chapters ii and iii). This plea is his denunciation of the social evils which calls down the judgment of God upon the Nation:

Isaiah v:8 Woe unto them that
join house to house, that lay
field to field, till there be
no more room, and ye be made to
dwell alone in the midst of the
land.

v:9 In mine ears saith
Jehovah (Jahveh) of hosts, of a
truth many houses shall be made
desolate, even great and fair,
without inhabitant.

v:10 For ten acres of
vineyard shall yield one bath,
and a homer of seed but an ephah.

3. Liquor Condemned

Secondly, Isaiah turns his attention to those who use strong drink, against dissipation and accompanying spiritual blindness:

Isaiah v:11 Woe unto them that
rise up early in the morning,
that they may follow strong
drink; that tarry late into the
night, till wine inflame them!

v:12 And the harp and
the lute, the tabret and the pipe

and wine, are in their feasts;
but they regard not the work
of Jehovah (Jahveh), neither
have they considered the operation
of their hands.

Isaiah v:13 Therefore my people
are gone into captivity for lack
of knowledge; and their honorable
men are famished, and their multitude
are parched with thirst.

v:14 Therefore Sheol
hath enlarged its desire, and
opened its mouth without measure;
and their glory, and their multitude,
and their pomp, and he
that rejoiceth among them, descend
into it.

v:15 And the mean man is
bowed down, and the great man is
humbled, and the eyes of the lofty
are humbled:¹

v:16 but Jehovah (Jahveh)
of hosts is exalted in justice,
and God the Holy One is sanctified
in righteousness.²

v:17 Then the lambs feed as
in their pastures, and the waste
wanders eat.

4. Scepticism Condemned

Isaiah next attacks the scepticism which causes
men to turn to sin:

Isaiah v:18 Woe unto them that
draw iniquity with cords of
falsehood, and sin as it were
with a cart rope;

v:19 that say, Let him
make speed, let him hasten his
work, that we may see it; and
let the counsel of the Holy One

1 and 2 These verses are considered to be Secondary
by some authorities.

of Israel draw nigh and come,
that we may know it!

5. Confusion of Moral Distinction Condemned

Again Isaiah condemns those who confuse moral distinctions:

Isaiah v:20 Woe unto them
that call evil good, and good
evil: that put darkness for
light, and light for darkness;
that put bitter for sweet, and
sweet for bitter!

6. Shrewd Politicians Condemned

Isaiah indicts the shrewd and self-satisfied politicians when he says:

Isaiah v:21 Woe unto them
that are wise in their own
eyes, and prudent in their
own sight.

It is very likely that he also has the statesmen in mind in such passages as xxviii:9ff; xxix:14ff; xxx:1-10; and in xxxi:1ff.

7. Corrupt Judges Condemned

And in turn in the next verses Isaiah condemns the irregular and corrupt judges:

Isaiah v:22 Woe unto them that
are mighty to drink strong wine,
and men of strength to mingle
strong drink;

v:23 that justify the
wicked for a bribe, and take
away the righteousness of the
righteous from him!

Isaiah in verse 23 implies that wine results in injustice on the bench, whereas in verses 15ff. wine destroyed

serious thought.

8. Further Sympathy for Oppressed Expressed

That Isaiah had profound sympathy for the oppressed is shown by the judgment scene of Isaiah iii:13-15. In this instance Jahveh serves in the capacity as accuser and judge:

Isaiah iii:12 As for my people,
children are their oppressors,
and women rule over them. O my
people, they that lead thee cause
thee to err, and destroy the way
of their paths.

iii:13 Jehovah (Jahveh)
standeth up to contend, and
standeth to judge the peoples.

iii:14 Jehovah (Jahveh)
will enter into judgment with the
elders of his people, and the
princes thereof: It is ye that
have eaten up the vineyard; the
spoil of the poor is in your houses:

iii:15 What mean ye that
ye crush my people, and grind
the face of the poor? saith the
Lord, Jehovah (Jahveh) of hosts.

9. A Conception of a Regenerated Society

Another strong indictment toward legislators who are active oppressors is found in Isaiah x:1-2 and has been discussed above. A slightly different aspect of his interests is found in chapter xxxii:1-6, in which Isaiah presents his own conception of the ideal commonwealth of the Messianic Age. While some consider it a continuation of chapter xxxi, it is usually accepted as an independent prophecy:

Isaiah xxxii:1 Behold a king shall
reign in righteousness, and princes

shall rule in justice.

xxxii:2 And a man shall be as a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest, as streams of water in a dry place, as the shade of a great rock in a weary land.

xxxii:3 And the eyes of them that see shall not be dim, and the ears of them that hear shall hearken.

xxxii:4 And the heart of the rash shall understand knowledge, and the tongue of the stammerers shall be ready to speak plainly.

xxxii:5 The fool shall no more be called noble, nor the churl said to be bountiful.

xxxii:6 For the fool will speak folly, and his heart will work iniquity, to practise profaneness, and to utter error against Jehovah (Jahveh), to make empty the soul of the hungry, and to cause the drink of the thirsty to fail.

This prophecy gives a clear conception of Isaiah's conception of a regenerated society in which sound moral judgment will make for the ideal commonwealth toward which he looked.

10. An Indication of Incomplete Record of Prophecies

Commentators state that nowhere in Isaiah's extant prophecies is there a direct reference to the condemnation of unchastity. But we are not to assume that the absence of such means that he had no occasion to condemn it, but rather it would indicate that we have an incomplete record of his prophecies. Some indication of his attitude

is contained in i:10, where the rulers of Sodom and Gomorrah are warned, and in i:21 Jerusalem is indicted as being a harlot and hence iniquitous, although the use of such a term was based on injustice, not impurity.

11. Summary

There is much evidence to show that Isaiah was chiefly concerned with social conditions. He was much agitated by the increase in wealth which seemed to indicate that the land was "full of silver and gold" (ii:7). It was evident to Isaiah that there was an uneven distribution of wealth and each day brought on a greater contrast between those who had wealth and those who had not. Furthermore it is certain that Isaiah attributed much of the misery to the attitudes held by those of the upper classes. Thus it was that they were "adding house to house and field to field" so rapidly that it seemed that soon "they would dwell alone in the midst of the land", which was a way of saying that the small owners were being dispossessed by the large estates of the wealthy land owners (v:8). It was in this manner that prosperity brought about a stronger desire for the successful minority to acquire more property at the expense of the masses and it is clearly understood that Isaiah had the courage to stand against such practice.

He likewise found occasion to find much fault with the judges and courts of Jerusalem and indicts them accordingly:

Isaiah i:21 How is the faithful city become a harlot! she that was full of justice! righteousness lodged in her, but now murderers.

i:22 The silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water.

i:23 Thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves; every one loveth bribes, and followeth after rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them.

Isaiah went even further, and proposed a remedy for the ills that had befallen his people which was a fitting climax to this social program for which he labored:

Isaiah i:27 Zion shall be redeemed with justice, and her converts with righteousness.

And there was no other way; it was just as impossible for peace to issue to those who called "evil good, good evil", and it was just as disastrous, as it was for those who put "darkness for light, and light for darkness", or "bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter"(v:20).

As a summary of the significance of the work of Isaiah as a Social Reformer, it is fitting to quote the eminent scholar, George Adam Smith :

"It is with remarkable persistence that in every civilization the two main passions of the human heart, love of wealth and love of pleasure, the instinct to gather, and the instinct to squander, have sought precisely these two forms denounced by Isaiah in which to work their social havoc - appropriation of the

soil and indulgence in strong drink. Every civilized community develops sooner or later its land-question and its liquor-question. - - - They are huge sins, and require not only the statesman's wits, but all the penitence and zeal of which a nation's conscience is capable. It is in this that the force of Isaiah's treatment lies. We feel that he is not facing questions of State, but sins of men. He has nothing to tell us of what he considers the best system of land tenure, but he enforces the principle that in the case with which land may be absorbed by one person the natural covetousness of the human heart has a terrible opportunity for working ruin upon society. - - - Isaiah does not touch on its methods, but exposes its effects on the country - depopulation and barrenness, - and emphasizes its religious significance. - - - And in one of those elliptical statements by which he often startles us with a sudden sense that God Himself is acquainted with all our affairs, and takes His own interest in them, when he adds 'All this was whispered to me by Jahveh; In mine ears the Lord of Hosts (v:9)'".³

3. Smith, G.A., The Book of Isaiah, vol.1, pp.41-42.

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Amos and Hosea give a picture of the religious, moral, and social life in Israel.
Isaiah and Micah present the same material for Judah.

CHAPTER V CONDEMNATION OF EXTERNAL RELIGIOUS CEREMONIALS

1. Introduction

Any attempt at an appreciation of the outstanding character of the work of the prophet Isaiah must include an evaluation of his attitude toward sacrifice and ritual as practiced in his time. We must not be too ready to hold a preconceived notion of this fact unless we have been careful to arrive at a true conception. Our Latin-derived word "sacrifice" (sacer, holy, and facere, to make) does not carry out the Hebrew origin of the word, which made the killing of a victim the central feature of the ceremony.

As we shall presently see, there is a contribution made by the prophet Isaiah in appreciation of the significance of sacrifice. But if we turn first to the oldest parts of the Old Testament we find Jahveh is represented as enjoying the savor of sacrifice (Gen.viii:21; Lev.i:9,13,17); when Jahveh became manifest to man, he received hospitality in the form of sacrifice (Judges vi:17ff; xiii:15) and his anger was appeased by the same method (Gen. viii:20-21; i Sam. xxvi:19). Further attempt at presenting the evidence that Jahveh expected sacrifice need not be presented here.

2. Types of Sacrifices

Before going further, it is essential that we look into the various kinds and types of sacrifices which

are known to have been in existence. We shall not attempt to classify them formally, but it is necessary to present them:

a. Sacrifice in which¹

1. the god and worshippers shared;
2. atonement was made for bloodshed within the group;
3. the god was slain and eaten by the worshippers;

b. Sacrifice which²

1. cleansed from impurity and made fit for common use;
2. removed sanctity and made fit for common use;
3. provided a tutelary deity of a house;
4. was a gift to the god as a placation or bribe;
5. provided a guide for the dead;
6. strengthened the dead by blood or life of a living being;
7. involved a human being for purposes of substitution.

3. Development of Ritual

It is to be noted further that one cannot look far into the development of sacrifice without encountering two diversified opinions regarding the development of ritual. Accordingly, there are (a) those who consider it to be pre-Exilic in origin and (b) those who consider it to be post-Exilic in origin. There is, as has been shown above, no question but that sacrifice was of great importance in pre-Exilic times, but it seems to be clear that ritual was condemned in Exodus xx:24-26; xxxiii:18-19; and in xxxiv:25-26;

1. Encyclopaedia Britannica, 11th.Ed., Vol.23; pp.980-986
 2. " " " " " 14; pp.862-864

but it is also ignored in Amos iv:4-5, 21ff; and in Hosea vi:6; vii:11ff; Isaiah i:5 and Jer. vi:19-20. It is evident that Ezekiel (chapters xl and xlviii) was the first to attach importance to it and by the post-Exilic period the Priestly Code made ritual an act of great importance. In any case, it is evident that ritual as such underwent an evolutionary development and finally was accepted as an essential part of sacrifice.³

4. The Oblation

The oblation of pre-Exilic times meant both bloody and unbloody offerings; as we find in Genesis iv:3 it applied to both the offerings of Cain and of Abel whereas in post-Exilic times it denoted vegetable or meal offerings (Lev. iiff; vi:7ff; viii:9). A similiar development is to be noted in regard to incense, where in the time of Isaiah it meant the smoke or vapor of the burning fat, while in the post-Exilic period it was the smoke from specially compounded spices burned in the censer (Exodus xxx:35; ii Chron. ii:3; xiii:2)⁴.

5. Isaiah's Attitude Toward Sacrifice

Isaiah has wasted no time in bringing to the fore his beliefs regarding the fallacy of the accepted conception of sacrifices and of the methods involved in

3. Schaff-Herzog Encyclopaedia of Religious Knowledge
Vol. 6, pp.36-45 and 163-167

4. New Century Bible Vol. 14, pp.44-48.

their propitiation of Jahveh. He points out that there are moral and religious issues which must be faced in order that there should be no dispute between Jahveh and Israel (Isaiah i:2-20).

It would seem that Isaiah is striking at the very heart of the established ritualistic religion of the time; justice was not to be found and injustice was encountered at every point of activity. The guilty were acquitted and the innocent even had their guiltlessness taken away from them. It seems that every age has more or less of this difficulty and Isaiah again had courage to stand out against the majority.⁵

6. Isaiah Breaks with the Ritual and Institutions

And this brings us to the very heart of this issue regarding the lower and the upper classes. In expressing a conception of religious belief Isaiah broke from the accepted ritual and institutions of his time and did that which made him forever a prophet. He did not stress sacrifice, but clearly pointed out that what should be done was:

Isaiah i:16 Wash you, make you
clean; put away the evil of your
doings from before mine eyes;
cease to do evil;

i:17 Learn to do well;
seek justice, relieve the oppressed,
judge the fatherless, plead for the
widow.

These commands have been put into a quotation of

5. Cambridge Bible Vol. on Isaiah, pp.xliiii-lxiii
Box Book of Isaiah, pp.22-28.

Jahveh and in light of what precedes them they take on an even greater significance. Isaiah has put into the Mouth of Jahveh words which directly condemn the status quo regarding sacrifice as was accepted and practiced at that time:

Isaiah i:11 What unto me is the multitude of your sacrifices? saith Jehovah (Jahveh): I have had enough of your burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs or of he-goats.

i:12 When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to trample my courts?

i:13 Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; new moon and sabbath, the calling of assemblies, - I cannot away with iniquity and the solemn meeting.

i:14 Your new moons and hour appointed feasts my soul hateth; they are a trouble unto me; I am weary of hearing them.

i:15 And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.

i:16 Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil;

i:17 Learn to do well; seek justice, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.

7. Summary

Isaiah emphatically and unmistakably indicates

here the fallacy of thinking that costly offerings can bribe Jahveh; he even goes so far as to say that these gifts are a direct insult to Jahveh and that the entire system of ritual is intolerable. This can be understood to mean nothing else than that Isaiah is condemning the popular conception of contemporary religion (Isaiah i:10-15).

In direct opposition to this prevalent conception, he demands moral reformation and civic righteousness as the only accepted service in the sight of Jahveh (Isaiah i:16ff). As a conclusion to the argument, Jahveh brings the nation to trial:

Isaiah i:18 Come now, and let us
reason together saith Jehovah (Jahveh):
though your sins be as scarlet, they
shall be as white as snow; though
they be red like crimson, they shall
be as wool.

i:20 If ye be willing and
obedient, ye shall eat the good of
the land;

i:21 but if ye refuse and
rebel, ye shall be devoured with the
sword, for the mouth of Jehovah
(Jahveh) hath spoken it.

It is here that the question is to be raised whether or not the prophet Isaiah would have abolished sacrifice completely and hence would have overthrown the Altar at Jerusalem. It seems that we do not have sufficient data to indicate his attitude toward this particular problem. We are probably safe in saying that the prophets in general would have accepted the institution had the people not

misinterpreted the nature of Jahveh. Since they considered Jahveh as being of a fleshly nature, demanding fleshly gifts, they missed the true prophetic conception that Jahveh was of the Spirit.

This leads us directly to Isaiah's conception of the Nature of Jahveh, and as a summary of the above, a quotation from Driver⁶ is appropriate:

"Like his predecessors, Hosea (vi:6) and especially Amos (v:21-27), Isaiah denounces with impassioned eloquence the inutility, in the sight of God, of the external observances of religion (i:10-17), and of a routine ceremonial (xxix:13ff), when not accompanied by sincerity of heart, and a consistent discharge of the duties of social life".

6. Driver, S.R., Isaiah: His Life and Times, p.109.

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CHAPTER vi ISAIAH'S CONCEPTION OF GOD

1. Introduction

We have seen that Isaiah ranks high as a great statesman of the ancient East. While his conclusions and policy were thoroughly statesmanlike, the grounds on which he based them were religious rather than political. It is impossible here to give even an outline of the chief elements in his teachings, but we shall call attention to the aspect of religion which is most prominent in him. Theologically, there is, of course, much that is common to Isaiah and to other prophets. Consequently, let us attempt to determine what is distinctive or new.

2. Isaiah's Contribution

The great contribution of Isaiah to the developing picture of Jahveh and Jahvism was his insistence on the Holiness of Jahveh. This was by no means a new idea, for the conception of Holiness in one form or another is necessarily almost as old as religion itself. In addition to this, Isaiah conceived of God as being infinitely High, exalted in Righteousness, far above the thought of His people; but as a complementary part to this latter statement, God was conceived to be infinitely Near, concerned and watchful of all the practical details of this life. This is indicative of the fact that the Book of Isaiah

contains the experience and testimony of a real life.

3. The Heart of Isaiah's Message

The keynote to Isaiah's philosophy is found in chapter vi and was probably given to his disciples after he had preached for some time. This was given "In the year that King Uzziah died" (c. 740 B.C.) and he presents his message in a very pleasing way. We must remember that before the writing of Deuteronomy and the consequent centralization of worship at Jerusalem Isaiah "saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; his train filled the temple" (Isaiah vi:1). And this realization is followed by "Holy, holy, holy, is Jehovah (Jahveh) of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory". Can we but remember and contrast this delineation of Jahveh with that of the Hebrew sanctuary in which the Lord was found beneath the Altar and where blood from the sacrifice was allowed to flow under the Altar as directed by ritual?

And thus it was that Isaiah could be quoted as condemning the Deuteronomic "centralization plan" which was later formulated. "The hem of His garment filled the temple", said Isaiah; a conception which even the Psalmist did not hold when he had Jahveh hidden in the corner of the sanctuary (Psalm 63:2).

4. The Holiness of Jahveh

The great trouble with the Israelites at the time of Isaiah was that they considered "sacrifices" to be

the essential point of their religion; they believed that the Deity could be bribed by offering him an abundance of sacrifices. Their conception of "Holiness" was that it could be acquired physically by the eating of sacrificial meat. Thus the Holiness of Jahveh was not considered as being a spiritual acquisition. And Deuteronomy failed to legislate against this teaching. Isaiah originated the conception of Jahveh as being "Israel's Holy One" and the term "winged angels", and "seraphim" are characteristic of him.

The above discussed conception of "Holiness" is introduced in Isaiah v:16, which should read "Jahveh shows himself as Holy through Righteousness" rather than "Jahveh is made Holy through Holiness". In contradiction to this, we find in Deuteronomy that Holiness of Jahveh is "taboo Holiness". And in chapter v:10ff Isaiah says something that no Hebrew prophet had said before, namely, that "Holiness is tied in with Righteousness", as expressed in the vernacular.

5. "The Great Arraignment"

In chapter i:10ff Isaiah delivers "The Great Arraignment" and condemns the popular interpretation of God and His demands for sacrifice. In this respect, as has been indicated above, Isaiah was ushering in a new day. A very important fact to remember in this connection is that Isaiah's message must have interested and challenged numerous people, otherwise his teachings would have been lost.

6. Summary

In chapter viii we find that Isaiah portrays Jahveh as being calm and collected, located high in the cirrus clouds, although, as has been pointed out earlier, the infinitely Near. This is the nearest approach the Old Testament makes to the New Testament Christianity. We need but to compare this conception of God to that of the Jahveh of the JE Documents. He rages and Moses serves as the "Great Vizier". In the older conception we find thunder, while in the new conception the "World is full of Jahveh's glory".

And such were some of the teachings of the great prophet Isaiah which gave him the well-deserved reputation of Moral Leader which he holds. And to quote Valerton¹,
 VIERTAL VOORLEZINGEN:

"Never perhaps has there been a prophet like Isaiah, who stood with his feet in the solid earth, with his heart in the things of eternity and with mouth and hand in the things of time, with his spirit in the eternal counsel of God and his body in a very definite moment of history".

1. For explanation regarding the source of this quotation, see Preface.

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CONCLUSION

It is universally accepted that it is only by studying a prophet in the light of the institutions of his time that one can grasp the import and significance of his work. This thesis has attempted to project the political and moral activities of Isaiah upon the background offered by the Social and Political Institutions of his time. Consequently, appreciation of the work of Isaiah by the focusing of our attention on his social and political ideas, as well as upon his reaction to them, indicates positively that he transcended the social and political limitations of his predecessors and contemporaries, as well as many who followed him.

Isaiah was firm in his conviction that political alliances with foreign nations would lead to ultimate disappointment and subsequent destruction. The more firmly the opposing forces pressed upon him, the more determined became his stand that not political dependence, but right-living and true worship of Jahveh were the basic principles upon which to rely for protection.

On the social question, Isaiah took a determined stand against the greediness of the successful minority in acquiring property at the expense of the masses. The judges and courts of law received just and vehement criticism. As a

substitute for the established practices of sacrifice, Isaiah concludes that the system of ritual is intolerable and is in reality a direct insult to Jahveh - what he demanded was moral reformation and civic righteousness.

Isaiah has given us a conception of Jahveh which most nearly approximates the New Testament Christianity. His contribution was in recognizing the Holiness of Jahveh - "Holy, holy, holy, is Jehovah (Jahveh) of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory", and consequently, the grounds upon which Isaiah built his principle of statesmanship were religious rather than political.

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